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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION  
THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2009

In Today's Papers

Gul: Turkey Will Solve Its Kurdish Question On Its Own  
Papers report President Abdullah Gul, in Kyrgyzstan on a state visit, told Turkish reporters Turkey would solve its Kurdish question on its own, and stressed that all political parties should contribute to a solution. Gul added state would never bargain with the terror organizations, and said democratic standards would not rise where there is terror. Gul also warned that if Turkey loses more time, new problems would emerge. Gul also said the status quo between Turkey and Armenia, along with the status quo between Armenia and Azerbaijan, benefits no one.

Baykal: Amnesty Possible Once the PKK Lays Down Its Arms  
Media outlets report opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal, who was visiting Adiyaman on his tour of the predominantly Kurdish Southeastern Turkey, said the PKK could be granted amnesty if they agree to lay down their arms and completely abandon their armed struggle. In "Baykal Sends Historic Message to the PKK," mainstream Hurriyet reports "an amnesty project will be launched as soon as the PKK quits making politics with weapons and completely disarms." Baykal added measures would be taken to not sentence those who turn themselves over to heavy imprisonment terms. "We have to provide hope to the region," said Baykal.

Meanwhile, papers report President Jalal Talabani has invited CHP leader Deniz Baykal to visit Iraq. Baykal told the press he regarded the official invitation as "appropriate," and would be "happy" to go to Iraq.

Disagreements Grow Over Sweeping of Mines on Turkey-Syria Border  
Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that in 2007, the Turkish military cleared landmines on part of Turkey's border with Syria, and that the military was capable of doing the mine sweeping again. In Adiyaman, CHP leader Deniz Baykal issued a call for blocking a bill drafted by the AKP to allow foreign companies to sweep the landmines along Turkey's border with Syria. An Israeli company is expected to win the contract, while the Turkish military says NATO's Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) should be considered as a primary choice. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says the Defense Ministry and the

military General Staff (TGS) oppose the mine-sweeping draft. The Defense Ministry told the Prime Ministry in February the bill was not seen appropriate because it won't help border security and it will negatively affect the people in the region. The Ministry also said the move will cause problems with Syria, and will end in loss of Turkey's oil rights to the land. Cumhuriyet also says the Finance Ministry made no explanation why the swept land would be leased for 44 years. Earlier this week, the ruling AKP government was strongly criticized by opposition parties which claim the government was selling Turkish soil to foreigners.

Mainstream Milliyet says the landmines along the Syrian border were first planted in 1956, and the Turkish military added more in 1989 and 1999 as a measure against the PKK militants' border infiltrations into Turkey from Syria. Official figures indicate 650,000 mines along the Syrian border, which, over the last 50 years, killed 3,000 people and crippled 7,000 others. Sweeping the mines is estimated to cost USD 500 million. The government plans to lease the territory to a mine-clearing company, which will be allowed to use the area for farming purposes for a period of 44 years.

#### Editorial Commentary on the Mine Sweeping Controversy

Ismail Kapan wrote in conservative/pro-government Turkiye: "For some reason, the government remains silent against the ongoing uneasiness regarding mine sweeping at Turkey's border with Syria. PM Erdogan should realize that this issue is not as simple as leaving the job to another country. Turkey worked so hard to normalize its ties with Syria and now nothing should poison this relationship."

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Ibrahim Karagul wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Any criticism about Israel's wrong doings and its crimes against humanity, such as Gaza, is being labeled as anti-Semitism in this country. However, being opposed to Israeli involvement in landmine cleaning in Turkey has nothing to do with being against Israel. What we are talking about Turkey's border with Syria, in which Israel has absolutely no role to play."

Nazli Ilicak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "The whole debate about cleaning landmines presents a confusing picture. We just don't know what the role of Israel will be and to what extent the worry expressed by the opposition reflects the truth. Prime Minister Erdogan should think of inviting opposition party leaders for individual meetings to listen their worries as well as to explain his perspective to them."

Taha Akyol wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "The ongoing landmine debate at the parliament has almost become a political landmine against the ruling AKP's unity. This process is not only blocked by the opposition, because there is a significant degree of opposition within the ruling AKP despite PM Erdogan's personal efforts."

Cuneyt Ulsever wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "PM Erdogan expressed harsh words against Israel in Davos but he tried to correct his approach vis-à-vis Israel afterwards. The whole debate on landmine cleaning is an indication of this process. In other words, it is now time for Turkey to pay the bill. Israel was apparently given a promise to take this cleaning job to Turkey and use the field for 44 years, and PM Erdogan is trying to juggle his promise to Israel and the growing ongoing opposition to it."

#### Cyprus Oil Drilling Stokes Fresh Tensions

Media are stirred up over an announcement from U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus Frank Urbancic's yesterday that a U.S. company has won the bid to drill for oil and gas off the coast of Cyprus. Mainstream Sabah reports, "The U.S. Says 'We'll look for oil,' and Stokes Tensions in Cyprus." Mainstream Haberturk reports, "The Petrol Crisis Is Dividing the Island," and notes, "The Turkish Cypriots voiced strong reactions to the U.S." and "condemned Ambassador Urbancic's statement." The paper reminds, "In 2007, Turkey sent warships when the Greek Cypriots allowed Egypt and Lebanon to search for oil," off the coast of Cyprus, where disputes continue regarding the limits of the Turkish continental shelf. Islamist-oriented

Zaman headlines, "Greek Cypriots Call On the U.S. for Oil; Ankara Is Leery." In "New Tensions in Cyprus," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "The Greek Cypriots stoke tensions in Cyprus by awarding a U.S. company with the bid to explore for oil and gas," as "The Greek Cypriots play a petrol game in the Mediterranean."

ECHR Rules against Turkey in Armenian Property Case  
Mainstream Haberturk reports the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled that Turkey pay compensation of 600,000 Euro for seizing a three-storey building in Istanbul, which was donated by Armenian businessman Hovnan Palakasyan to Surp Kevork Armenian Church Foundation 60 years ago. A court decision, however, seized the building and transferred it to the Treasury in 2002. Following the ECHR ruling, Turkey gave back the building to the Armenian foundation to avoid paying the compensation, reports Haberturk.

AI Report Criticizes Ongoing Rights Violations in Turkey  
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet and the Islamist-oriented Zaman carry excerpts from the latest report issued by the Amnesty International (AI) which states that human rights conditions in Turkey have recently deteriorated in many respects. AI notes severe human rights abuses regarding the Kurdish issue continued. The report notes the significance of the 'Ergenekon' investigation in Turkey, calling it a "groundbreaking prosecution." The report also criticizes the Constitutional Court's verdict against wearing the Islamic headscarf at universities. It also notes torture and

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mistreatment rose during 2008, especially in police stations and prisons.

War Alarms Sound on the Korean Peninsula (Radikal)  
Media outlets continue to express alarm over the increasingly dangerous war of words coming from North Korea. In "We Could Declare War," mainstream Sabah reports, "North Korea has paved the way to another huge earthquake in politics," as "yesterday they threatened South Korea by saying, 'If you stop our ships, we'll declare war.'" Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak calls North Korea's statement, "Like a declaration of war." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "North Korea No Longer Recognizes the Ceasefire," with South Korea, as "the nuclear gamble continues." Mainstream Hurriyet reports in, "Winds of War in Korea," that, "South Korea's reactions to North Korea's missile test have enraged North Korea," and "Russia took various measures along its border for fears that a nuclear war could break out." In "A Threat of War from North Korea," mainstream Haberturk reports, "Russia sends a warning," as a statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry said, "We believe North Korea is playing a dangerous game."

A Revenge Attack in Lahore  
Media outlets characterize yesterday's tragic suicide bombing in Lahore as an attack seeking revenge for Pakistan's operations in Swat. Mainstream Sabah reports, "The attack is suspected to be revenge for the Pakistani military's operations in Swat." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports in "Another Suicide Bombing in Pakistan," that "After Pakistan has fought the Taliban along its border region of Swat for the past month, the country was rocked by a bomb attack that took place in the Eastern Part of the country." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines, "Revenge for Swat: 30 Dead."

Obama's June 4 Speech  
Mainstream Haberturk reports in "An Obama Show from Egypt," that "The Egyptian administration is competing with Turkey, the rising star in the Islamic and Arab world," as "Obama chose Turkey as his first official overseas visit," but "he chose to deliver his speech to the Muslim world from Cairo." Mainstream Sabah notes media in the U.S. urge Obama "to point to Turkey as a successful example for democracy in the Muslim world."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu did not comment on the PKK leader Murat Karayilan's proposal for opening a Kurdish parliament in

Turkey according to the "Scottish model," and merely stressed that Turkey had a "well established parliamentary system."

- Female DTP activists plan to rally on May 31 in Diyarbakir to demand the release of 23 women arrested in security operations against the DTP offices.
- Niyazi Capa, the head of Osmangazi Culture Associations Federation in Eskisehir, is sentenced to five-month in prison sentence for posting during Israel's Gaza operations a placard which read, "Jews and Armenians Cannot Enter, Dogs Are Allowed." The prison sentence has been transferred to a fine of 3,000 lira.
- The State Planning Organization (DPT) expects Turkey's economy to shrink by 3.6 percent this year.
- Merrill Lynch warns Turkey needs to make a new deal with the IMF.

#### World

- Iran's reformist presidential hopeful Mir-Hussein Mousavi takes

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the lead in 10 major Iranian cities.

- Northern Iraq will begin on May 31 to export crude oil to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.
- Berlin will hold an international gathering against the construction of Ilisu dam which will permanently submerge the 10,000-year old settlement of Hasankeyf in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey.
- The Prime Minister of Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nedžad Branković, resigns amid tensions with other members in the country's tripartite leadership.
- Professor Ihsan Dogramaci, the founder of Turkey's prestigious Bilkent University, will open the International Bilkent University in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil, his birth place. The university will cost USD 40 million, and will kick off its programs in 2010.

SILLIMAN